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ABSTRACT

Radio communications have been as necessary to the development of Canadian territories north of the 60th parallel as roads, schools, medical services, and airstrips. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation did not pioneer broadcasting in northern Canada, but its Northern Service has been the only broadcasting company north of the 60th parallel for many years. The network employs fewer than 100 Indians, Eskimos, and Whites. It broadcasts in 3 Eskimo dialects, Northern Cree, Chipewyan, Slave, Dogrib, Loucheux, English, and French. The Northern Service is vitally concerned with the development of both human and natural resources in the North, the end result of which must be the well-being of all Canadians, including the native people of the North: the Eskimos, Indians, and Metis. In keeping with this, the Northern Service is trying to give voice to the native people so that they may discuss their problems among themselves, in their own language if they wish, and then on equal terms with their fellow Canadians. (EJ)

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"THE MEDIUM AND THE MESSAGE"

ADDRESS BY ANDREW COWAN, DIRECTOR OF THE NORTHERN SERVICE, CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION TO THE THIRD NORTHERN RESOURCES CONFERENCE, WHITEHORSE, Y.T. APRIL 10, 1969

When it was first suggested that I speak at this conference on the role of communications in Northern development the terms were so broad and general and bland they didn't seem to have anything to do with broadcasting; like trying to discuss family life in terms of "The Role of Motherhood in Reproduction".

In searching for a title to describe what I wanted to say I borrowed from the Guru of the mass media, Marshall McLuhan, and apologize for emasculating his classic aphorism that THE MEDIUM IS THE MESSAGE.

Communications in our terms of reference means mass communications and that includes what is now referred to as the print medium. But apart from reading newspapers and occasionally writing letters to the editor, I'm not an authority on the press. If I don't speak about it it's not because I don't consider it important. Newspapers are essential for a healthy society in the North as elsewhere and it's in everyone's interest including CBC's to keep them healthy and vigorous. We need them to tell the public what's on the air.

The CBC Northern Service does not carry commercial advertising, although we have been urged to do so by merchants and others, because we believe that it is against the public interest for CBC to compete with

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newspapers for the limited amount of advertising revenue available in the North.

THE MEDIUM

In discussing broadcasting in the North I'm going to be talking about the CBC - what it's doing, what it wants to do and what it can do. North of the 60th parallel we are the only broadcasters - if we exclude closed circuit T.V. This won't be the case when Ralph Hougen's radio station is launched in Whitehorse in a few months. Broadcasting is essential to Northern development - like roads, schools, medical services, air strips. It is natural the publicly owned, national broadcasting service should be the means of providing it.

CBC did not pioneer broadcasting in the North. The real pioneers were the men of the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals who came into the North in 1923 to operate a communications system, the NORTHWEST TERRITORIES AND YUKON RADIO SYSTEM, whose long and honoured career only ended ten years ago. It was an enthusiastic amateur of the RCCS who started broadcasting on a makeshift transmitter CJCU Aklavik in 1932. During the war when the Alaska Highway, Canol and Ferry Command brought servicemen into the North they started local radio stations for their own information and amusement.

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CBC did not start the first television station in the North. Neil Colville started the closed circuit system in Whitehorse in the early sixties that Ralph Hougen operates today. A similar closed circuit system was started in Yellowknife about the same time but it failed. A hardy entrepreneur started a T.V. broadcasting station in Churchill some years ago which has had a rugged financial history and is now run by the community of Churchill. The CBC supplies it with most of its programs.

In Northern Quebec and Labrador the Iron Ore Company of Canada built television stations at Schefferville and Labrador City in 1965, the only mining company in Canada, to my knowledge, to do so. The CBC supplies all their programs.

Although the CBC only came into the North ten years ago it has always been concerned with the North. So was the Radio Broadcasting Commission before it. The oldest continuous program being broadcast by CBC today is NORTHERN MESSENGER which was started in 1932 and is still going strong.

In 1958 CBC set up a regional organization in the North as it had in every other part of Canada. I've been with the Northern Service from its beginning and had something to do with its inception. My colleague Lloyd Moore has also. He has had the job of equipping the stations and organizing the networks throughout the North.

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There's nothing very precise about the boundaries of the Northern Region. It includes the Territories and the Northern parts of all the provinces except the Maritimes. All the parts that the other regions aren't interested in. We reckon the area to be about two million square miles with a population of less than 100,000 people.

Most of our first ten years were spent building up the radio service. The next few years will be taken up with developing television. But not at the expense of radio.

Radio is a vital necessity in the North. Television is an enrichment. We believe that everyone should get something before some get everything. We have tried to give a medium wave radio service to as many people as possible before giving some communities television. We estimate that about 80% of the people of the North can get the medium wave service, and most of those that cannot, can get shortwave. Until television can be received on home receivers from satellite it cannot, except at unreasonable cost, be made universally available as radio can. And while direct reception from satellites is theoretically possible in engineering terms I'm told it won't be feasible for a good many years.

Today in its eleventh year of operation in the Northern Service has 31 radio stations, exclusive of those in Northern Quebec and Labrador. Five of them are program centres, Whitehorse, Yellowknife, Inuvik, Churchill and Frobisher Bay. They broadcast programs from the national networks and prepare and broadcast programs of their own. 25 are Low Power Relay Transmitters that broadcast programs from area network centres. Whitehorse is

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the program centre for the Yukon network of twelve LPRTs extending from Cassiar in Northern B.C. to Beaver Creek on the Alaska Highway and Clinton Creek west of Dawson. Yellowknife is the program centre for the Mackenzie network stretching from Uranium City in Saskatchewan and Fort Chipewyan in Alberta to Fort Good Hope on the lower Mackenzie.

We take a certain amount of pride in the Northern Service in the development of our Yukon and Mackenzie networks. It's a pioneering job within the CBC, although in the wonderland "outside" no one pays much attention to it. We think it is a system that can be applied throughout Canada particularly areas such as Northern Ontario where population is small, many of them Indians, and communities scattered and isolated. By means of LPRTs connected to an area program centre, a medium wave service can be provided at the lowest possible cost; a program service to meet local and regional needs helps develop a feeling of community among people living in isolated communities.

All the Northern Service stations except Frobisher Bay are connected to the national networks "outside" so that you can hear the same programs in Inuvik as you can in Halifax. The Northern Service leases 5,000 miles of landlines, most of them from CNT, for its networks.

It has a staff of just under 100 people which includes Indians, Eskimos and Metis, as well as English and French speaking members. It broadcasts in three Eskimo dialects, Northern Cree, Chipewyan, Slave, Dogrib, Loucheux, English and French.

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The Northern shortwave service serves those areas that cannot be served by medium wave - the High Arctic, Northern Quebec and Keewatin, with 8½ hours a day of broadcasts in English, French and Eskimo. The CBC shortwave plant at Sackville is being extended and improved so that by the early '70s we should be able to broadcast longer hours with a stronger signal. The audience for shortwave, besides the bulk of Canada's Eskimos (8,000 out of a total of 13,000) and those outsiders, police, missionaries, administrators who serve them, includes the scientists, explorers, construction workers, fliers and sailors who go into the North during the summer season. They are few in numbers but their appreciation index is high.

Some of the small communities of the North, particularly Eskimo communities in the Eastern Arctic, which cannot receive the medium wave service, have shown an interest in having low power radio stations of their own. The CBC co-operated with the Departments of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Transport in studying the possibility of this and concluded that low power community F.M. stations operated by volunteers were possible at a reasonable price. The government has now to decide whether or not to go ahead with the proposal.

In the normal course of events it would have been some years before communities in the North would have qualified for CBC television. The Corporation's formula for extending its T.V. service was a democratic one based on the size of communities. Northern towns by size came far down the national list. However the CBC recognized that size wasn't the only factor to be considered in the North. Isolation and the need to provide a link with the "outside" was equally important. The need was often in inverse proportion to the size of a community.

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Because of the high cost of television the CBC engineers designed what we call the Frontier Package Television station to provide a service at the lowest possible cost. The station broadcasts a four-hour reel of videotaped programs at a time. There is a minimum of labour involved both in recording and transmitting. The reels of videotape are circulated among several stations.

Pilot television stations were established in 1967 at Yellowknife, Lynn Lake, Manitoba and Havre St. Pierre on the lower St. Lawrence.

Today there are Frontier T.V. stations at Whitehorse, and Watson Lake in the Yukon, Cassiar, northern B.C., Uranium City, Saskatchewan in addition to Yellowknife and Lynn Lake. By the end of the year there will be stations at Hay River, Fort Smith, Pine Point and Inuvik in the Northwest Territories and Dawson City, Elsa and Clinton Creek in the Yukon. Others will be built in subsequent years, including Faro (in 1970, we hope), Tungsten and Ross River. We don't like to give out information too far ahead.

The Frontier stations are being installed in remote communities, particularly mining towns, in other parts of Canada besides the North.

Like every other service in the North, broadcasting is expensive. It is also subject to most of the human and physical problems that confront enterprises in the North, including public misunderstanding. Shortwave, which would seem to be Providence's answer to distance and isolation, has to contend periodically with atmospheric interference associated with the magnetic pole. I believe it's easier to broadcast to Northern Canada across the North Pole from Siberia than it is from southern Canada. In the

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wintertime frost on the lines sometimes interferes with network service. Last winter in Churchill the radio tower blew down in the high winds off the Bay but it couldn't be repaired immediately because of a white-out and prowling Polar bears. The year before the copper ground wire at the transmitter site disappeared, a tribute to the high price of copper.

The cost of providing a broadcasting service is higher per capita in the North than in any other region of Canada. The estimate of the cost of CBC is $7.30 a year for every Canadian. For the North is is $25.00 a year. It will be higher as more television stations are installed. The cost of radio is like a Woolworth's bargain basement compared to television.

The Northern Service is often asked to do things it isn't equipped to do and frequently criticized for the things it does. I'm not complaining. We are a public service accountable to the public we serve and which pays for us. The day when we cease to be criticized is the day we should be buried. I do feel mild resentment when the Northern Service is charged with being run by a bunch of draft dodgers or worse, who hide out in Ottawa instead of being in the North where the action is. But Ottawa happens to be the most convenient and economical place to operate a service that extends from Inuvik to Frobisher Bay, from Churchill to Alert, without any east west lines of communication. If the regional headquarters were located at Yellowknife the people of the Yukon wouldn't speak to us. And having seen the vials of wrath they pour on Edmonton I woundn't want to offend them. If we were in Whitehorse the Northwest Territories wouldn't have anything to do with us. I haven't heard anyone abusing Premier Bennett because he runs his province not only from its southern end but from an island off its coast!

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THE MESSAGE

When we talk of the development of the North most of us think of the exploitation of its physical resources. The Vision of the North is a figment compounded of self interest and idealism. There's wealth in the North if only we can get at it. And it is right and proper that it should be got at.

But the end result of the resource development must be the well being of all Canadians including the people of the North.

Undeveloped human resources (which is another name for poverty) is a far greater and more serious problem than undeveloped physical resources and we've got plenty of both in the North. If we develop the material wealth and fail to develop the potentialities of the people who live here we will have failed not only them but the people of Canada. For the people of Canada have invested large amounts of money and talent here.

From the point of view of broadcasting audiences, the people of the North fall into two groups - those who come in from "outside" to develop its resources, administer it and minister to the physical and spiritual needs of the people; and those who were born here and most of whose ancestors lived here for countless generations.

Those of the first group live in the North for varying lengths of time, some, a minority, all their working lives; few of them die here. The others stay here because this is their home and they have nowhere else to go. The first group is an economic and social elite drawn from the majority culture

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of Canada; the other group is made up largely of what the Economic Council of Canada calls 'citizens minus' - Indians, Eskimos and Metis. In the Yukon they are a minority of the population - 15%; in the Northwest Territories they are a majority, almost 60%.

Most of the first group are employed and prosperous; most of the second live in a state of subsidized poverty.

The future despite universal elementary education, job training development of the economy holds out little hope that this situation will be changed. Because the economic development of the North involves skilled manpower high in pay but low in numbers, it's unlikely that the natural increase of the dominant population can find employment here let alone the vastly greater increase in the numbers of the "citizens minus".

The two groups are like the two nations in a single state that Disraeli referred to a hundred years ago. They have different living standards, different racial and cultural backgrounds, different social and economic objectives, and in some cases speak different languages. How is one broadcasting system to serve the two?

Let me take first those who come in from "outside".

In dealing with Northern Development the Economic Council of Canada in its annual report for 1966 stated: (p. 262)

"It will require imaginative approaches and special efforts to deal with the particular difficulties of living and

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working on a permanent basis under northern conditions. This is not just a matter of overcoming a relatively inhospitable climate and supplying the conventional amenities, but even more of providing the kinds of advanced services and the social environment which will help to alleviate a sense of isolation from the advantages of modern urban life. Unless these difficulties can be resolved, it is hard to see how the human resources and human skills necessary for productive development can be attracted and successfully held in the new communities of the North".

The strongest pressure on CBC to provide television for Northern communities came from the mining companies and the Minister of Northern Affairs. The mining companies hoped it would help stabilize their work force which in some cases was turning over at rates as high as 200% a year. John Deutsch, then Chairman of the Economic Council, stated in 1966 that "the provision of television was needed to attract workers from southern Canada into isolated Northern outposts." I hope it does for otherwise it might be hard in the present state of public expenditure to justify the cost.

The Northern Service has little difficulty in providing programs for the incomers within the limits of its physical plant, financial resources and manpower, programs approximating those they were accustomed to "outside". We have the resources of the national networks, radio and television, to draw on for news, entertainment, public affairs - the works. Clinton Creek gets the same programs as Toronto. In addition, thanks to the network of LPRTs,

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radio can provide local programs on weather, road and flying conditions, news, sports, public affairs and entertainment.

We can never do enough well enough and its natural and proper for the public to keep bugging us with their criticism and suggestions. I have a healthy respect for criticism and a dread of being ignored.

Most of the demands and criticism concern television. Those that haven't got it want it. Those that have it want more, they want it instant and they want it in colour. In the fulness of time I hope that everyone in the North will have all of these things. But in the meantime it's like asking why Whitehorse hasn't got the Toronto subway, or Yellowknife the Place Ville Marie or Inuvik the Lion's Gate Bridge.

At present we are doing all we can for the incomers. In terms of our resources they get the major share of programs.

But what about the other half of the audience?

The 1966 annual report of the Economic Council I've already referred to goes on to say: (P. 262)

> "Finally no visitor to the North can help but be seized by the serious plight of the native people. Whatever the reasons, the impact of modern civilization upon the culture and way of life of the Eskimo and Northern Indians has been sudden, drastic and disruptive. Their problem today is both difficult and urgent. The need to improve their social and economic condition, and at the same time to assure them of a rightful

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participation in the future development of the North, constitutes a pressing challenge to the people of Canada today."

Mr. Arthur Laing, then Minister of Northern Affairs, was quoted by Canadian Press after the Council's visit to the North as saying that "The North is a storehouse of wealth under the ground and in developing it Indians and Eskimos must be fully and fruitfully employed"; and John Deutsch as saying that "more needs to be done to educate and employ the native people in resource development".

Well what is broadcasting's part in that task that everyone seems to be agreed on?

It is, as I've said, comparatively easy to serve the dominant group, the elite of the North. But the crunch comes in serving the others, the "citizens minus". It is new country, a frontier. We have neither a reservoir of programs to draw on from the networks nor a body of experience within the CBC. During the past ten years we have gathered experience of our own and tried to learn from what other countries are doing in similar situations.

The native people of the North are part of the great national body of the poor, that second nation within Canada, which the Economic Council has estimated to be between 20 and 25% of the population. And they admit that is a conservative estimate. One person in every five in Canada lives below the poverty line.

The Economic Council, in its fifth annual report last September says:

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"Poverty in Canada is real. Its numbers are not in the thousands but the millions. There is more of it than our society can tolerate, more than our economy can afford, and far more than existing measures and efforts can cope with. Its persistence at a time when the bulk of Canadians enjoy one of the highest standards of living in the world is a disgrace."

Strong words for economists.

The Indians and Eskimos and Metis have the doubtful distinction of being at the bottom of the poverty heap. In the Territories the poor constitute a third of the population, well above the national average.

Of the Indians, Eskimos and Metis the Economic Council says:

"A few simple statistics tell a brutal story. The average age at death for all Canadians in 1965 was a little over 62 years, the average for Eskimos was only about 20 years, and for Indians approximately 36 years. Another is that infant mortality rates among Indians and Eskimos in the Northwest Territories in 1966 were 108.8 deaths per thousand live births for Eskimos and 46.2 for Indians, compared with the all Canada figure of 23.1."

The report points out some of the special factors affecting the Indians, Eskimos and Metis:

(i) they are the most rapidly growing ethnic group in Canada (50% of all Canadians are under 25, 65% of all Indians.);

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(ii) the chances of living off the land are declining (hunting and trapping);

(iii) low income potential of most of the reserves;

(iv) "the continuing difficulties that they face in coping with and adapting to the problems of the major society, both because of present attitudes within the white community and because of strong cultural differences." (That's an economist's definition of racism.)

These people, the Indians, Eskimos and Metis, despite the hazards of birth and existence, are increasing rapidly in numbers. I believe the present Indian population of Canada will double itself in 14 years. They cannot be ignored. They won't let us ignore them even if we wished to.

The President of the United States and the Prime Minister of Canada regard poverty with its corollary the crisis in our cities as the major social and political problem of North America. The Prime Minister has expressed his concern at the social and political unrest it engenders. He has spoken repeatedly of his concern for the condition of the Indians, Eskimos and Metis. He remarked recently "I think that all of us feel a sense of guilt, not so much toward the Indian, as toward the fact that we haven't really addressed our mind to his problems". Premier Thatcher has referred to the Indian/Metis problem in his own province as a time bomb whose fuse is getting ever shorter.

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What has happened and is happening in the cities of the United States can happen in Canada.

Nowhere in Canada is the contrast between the beneficiaries of prosperity and the "citizens minus" as naked as in the North because we can't conceal it here as we can in the slums of large cities.

Martin Luther King said that violence is the language of the inarticulate. The "citizens minus" are largely inarticulate. They must be made articulate and broadcasting is one of the ways of doing it.

The Northern Service is trying to give voice to the Indian, Eskimo and Metis, on radio to begin with, so that they may discuss their situation among themselves, in their own language if they wish, and then on equal terms with their fellow Canadians. The political and social health of Canada demands this dialogue. But it must be a dialogue of equals.

The vitality and aggressiveness of the young, which if frustrated becomes the explosive force of violence, must be made constructive so that it contributes to their well being and ours and is not a drain on both. It must have a means of expression.

Radio is a ready made medium for a people whose cultural traditions are all oral, who have no written memory of the race of more than 2500 years to draw on and have not been communicating with each other by the printed word for the past 600 years as we have.

Their thoughts, ideals and plans must be discussed among themselves and communicated to and discussed with the major group who have all the power, all the wealth and all the jobs. Hopefully political and social action will

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follow. This was nicely summed up by a statement of purpose of a group on the west coast, the Society for a Coastal Network, that works among Indians there. "Man must have the courage to speak, the means to be heard and the place to act."

What can the middle class oriented, publicly owned, national broadcasting system do to develop the underdeveloped native communities of the North? I'll mention some of the things I think we should do and are trying to do.

I think we must make the people part of our operation, take them on staff, consult them, give them programs they want in a form that appeals to them and they understand, in their own language if necessary. We must give them the information they need in their daily lives - news, health education, information on jobs. We must have programs for the children, including the pre-school age ones. We must give them an image of themselves that raises their self esteem - broadcasts of their history, folk tales, programs of their singers and musicians, plays by them, for them and about them. We must give them back their heroes, their folk myths which embody their ethos and their self-respect. We've robbed them of them, destroyed them, belittled them.

I was reminded of a remark that Bertrand Russell made of how, as a boy, he had, like other English speaking school boys, admired Sir Francis Drake as a great hero, and when as a man he met Spaniards he found that Sir Francis Drake was no hero to the Spaniards, he was a devil incarnate. I think we've got to have the humility to see that our heroes aren't always the heroes

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of other people. In other words, I'm not so sure that our heroes are heroic to the Indians and the Eskimos.

And we must give them the platform to speak their thoughts about their situation as they see it.

From its inception the Northern Service has broadcast where possible and where necessary in the local languages - Indian and Eskimo - for two reasons: there are still a large number of them, particularly the older generation, who speak only their mother tongue; and it is one way we can show respect for one of the few things left of their cultural heritage.

I would like the native peoples to be as demanding and as critical of CBC as their affluent fellow citizens, to start bitching for themselves. When they do, I will know they regard the CBC as theirs, just as other Canadians do - or if they don't, they should.

Our policy is to employ native people on staff proportionate to their numbers in the total population of the North. We haven't achieved that objective. This is no easier for us than it is for other employers. At present we have five or six full time members who are Indian, Eskimo or Metis, including the manager of the station at Inuvik, Elijah Menarik, an Eskimo.

But we employ a large number of freelance broadcasters, as speakers, translators, reporters, and commentators. Among our public affairs programs are the open line and discussions. Simonee, the elected member of the Northwest Territorial Council for the Eastern Arctic, was the host of an open line program in Eskimo on station CFFB, Frobisher Bay before his election.

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We broadcast legends and stories of the past by those who still remember them. We have experimented with soap opera, one of the most potent forms of brain washing in the armoury of the mass media. This has been in Eskimo but we hope to do them in Indian languages. We commissioned as a Centennial project forty fifteen minute serial dramas about life in an Eskimo village. They were produced in Povungnituk with Eskimo actors, and were a great success. We have commissioned an Eskimo woman at POV to do another series of six as an experiment. It will be entirely an Eskimo story, production and acting.

For Indians we have a program called Indian Magazine which was produced by Northern Service and taken over by the English network. It is for, by and about Indians across Canada and has a large following among non-Indians as well as Indians.

But our most important experiment is the Community Action Program. It was inspired by Farm Radio Forum which CBC pioneered thirty years ago and which has been adapted by underdeveloped countries in Africa and Asia. Its basic principle is discussion and a feedback from the listeners. The broadcasts deal with matters of interest and concern to the people; the people listen, discuss them and then give their point of view. This is sent to the program's producers for broadcast on the program the following week. Instead of expecting Indian and Eskimo groups to write we are trying to get them to tape record their views. Tape recorders are another technological advance that bridges the cultural gap.

We co-operate with the Indian-Eskimo Association in this program. They work in the field getting the native people to help plan the programs.

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organize the listening groups and record their views.

These programs can act as a catalyst on the political thinking of the native people and help them to come to a consensus among themselves so that they can speak with their fellow Canadians from a position of strength.

Only by becoming articulate, by making themselves heard, can they achieve a political power base to help them further their own well being and the well being of all Canadians.

I believe the native peoples of Canada have something to teach us and I hope we have the humility to learn from them.

Most of them have not yet been indoctrinated with the philosophy of individualism, aggressiveness and acquisitiveness as a means of social and economic advancement, although Mr. Arthur Laing, when Minister of Northern Affairs, thought they should acquire those qualities in order to succeed in our world. They do not have our scale of values to measure a man's social worth based on the accumulation of property.

But many of those values are being questioned today. Perhaps the Indians and Eskimos are ahead of us in their philosophy of working to live and sharing what they have.